

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6118

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT LOUIS 0772

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PINT MP

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER RAMGOOLAM'S REMARKS ABOUT PARLIAMENTARY
ELECTIONS AND STATE OF EMERGENCY

REF: PORT LOUIS 769

1. AT HIS AUGUST 23 PRESS CONFERENCE AT PLAISANCE AIRPORT
ON RETURN FROM COLOMBO (REFTEL) PRIME MINISTER RAMGOOLAM
BECAME VISIBLY ANGRY WHEN HE WAS ASKED BY A REPORTER FOR
LE MILITANT, ORGAN OF THE MARXIST MMM PARTY, TO COMMENT ON
THE STATEMENT OF A CERTAIN POLITICAL PARTY (THE MMM) THAT THE
STATE OF EMERGENCY SHOULD BE LIFTED IMMEDIATELY SO THAT THE
COMING GENERAL ELECTIONS COULD BE HELD UNDER NORMAL CONDITIONS.
IN A VERY ANGRY TONE RAM JUMPED ON THE QUESTIONER VERBALLY,
SAYING, "WHERE DO YOU SEE THIS STATE OF EMERGENCY? WHERE
DO YOU HAVE IT? DON'T YOU WALK AROUND WHEREVER YOU WANT?
DON'T YOU WRITE WHAT YOU WANT? WHERE DOES THIS STATE OF
EMERGENCY EXIST? DO YOU WANT TO FLY LIKE A CROW THAT FEASTS
ON CADAVERS?"

2. MILITANT REPORTER REPEATED HIS QUESTION, WHICH ONLY ANGERED
RAMGOOLAM THE MORE. REPORTER FOR RIGHT-WING PAPER LE CERNEEN
THEN MENTIONED THAT CERTAIN SENIOR MINISTERS (HE WAS
REFERRING TO RINGADOO AND BOOLELL) HAD STATED PUBLICLY THAT
ELECTIONS WOULD DEFINITELY BE HELD THIS YEAR, STILL ANGRY,
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RAMGOOLAM SAID, "GO AND ASK THEM*" RESTORING HIS NORMAL

CALM EXTERIOR RAM THEN SAID HE WOULD HOLD ELECTIONS WHEN HE DEEMED THEM WORTHWHILE. HE SAID HE WOULD CONSULT HIS "SENIOR COLLEAGUES" BEFORE DECIDING. WITH GOOD HUMOR RAM THEN SAID, "DON'T THINK THE ELECTIONS WILL BRING ANY GREAT CHANGES. WE WILL BE RETURNED TO POWER. WE ARE STILL VERY STRONG." CHASTENED, THE JOURNALISTS ENDED THE PRESS CONFERENCE BY FAILING TO ASK FURTHER QUESTIONS.

3. COMMENT: IT IS TRUE THAT A STATE OF EMERGENCY CONTINUES IN FORCE. ONE OF THE MAJOR EFFECTS POLITICALLY IS THAT OPEN AIR POLITICAL RALLIES ARE FORBIDDEN (EXCEPT BY PERMISSION OF THE POLICE COMMISSIONER, WHO WITHHOLDS IT) WHICH MAKES IT DIFFICULT FOR THE MMM, DUVAL'S PMSD AND THE OTHER OPPOSITION PARTIES TO MOUNT A CAMPAIGN AGAINST RAMGOOLAM'S LABOR PARTY. THAT, OF COURSE, IS THE WAY RAM WANTS IT. HE MAY WELL LIFT THE STATE OF EMERGENCY FOR THE ELECTIONS, BUT HE IS LIKELY TO ARRANGE FOR A VERY SHORT CAMPAIGN, SO THAT THE OPPOSITION PARTIES WILL HAVE LITTLE TIME TO GET ORGANIZED AND STIR UP THE POPULACE.
KEELEY

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